



# The Strange Case of MARY PAGE

The Great McClure Mystery Story, Written by  
FREDERICK LEWIS In Collaboration With  
JOHN T. MINTYRE, Author of the Ashton  
Kirk Detective Stories. Read the Story  
and See the Essanay Moving Pictures

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## SYNOPSIS.

Mary Page, actress, is accused of the murder of James Pollock and is defended by her lover, Philip Langdon. Pollock was intoxicated. She, a crook and tool of Pollock, was on the fire escape watching for Langdon. At Mary's trial she admits she had the revolver. Her maid testifies that Mary threatened Pollock with it previously, and Mary's leading man implicates Langdon.

## "MY TIME WILL COME!"

**K**EEP your eye on this man Langdon! He was either in the room or at the door when James Pollock was murdered!"

The words of the witness were like a stone flung into a pool of subtle inference that sent ever-widening ripples of possibility to lap the very shores of suspicion itself. Every eye was on Langdon now, but except for a tightening of the muscles about his jaw he gave no sign of perturbation or anger.

The actor himself was uneasy now, however, and cast apologetic glances at both Mary and Langdon, moving nervously in the witness-stand as the prosecutor took up his questioning again.

"You say you overheard only a part of what was said before the police came. Will you tell us where you stood and why you heard only a part?"

"Yes, sir. The door opens out—as is always the case in hotel rooms—and when I started to open it I was behind it and therefore not visible from the room. But I could hear what was said when Mr. Langdon and detective Farley came out from the inner room of the suite where they had gone to look for Miss Page."

"And when the police came, did you remain in the room or did you join in the search for Miss Page?"

"I joined in the search, and went with the police down the fire-escape and through the back street."

"What had become of Miss Page?"

"I don't know."

"Do you mean that the police did not find where she had gone?"

"Yes."

"What did you do?"

"I returned to the hotel, got my hat and coat and went home."

"That is all," said the prosecutor.

But the Judge leaned forward and voiced the question that everybody in the courtroom was mutely asking.

"Do you mean to say that a young lady in an evening gown and with no cloak walked through that street back of the hotel and that no one saw her? That you and the police got no clue in your search?"

"Yes, your Honor. Mary Page had disappeared absolutely, and no one knows where she went."

Langdon smiled, and the Judge sat back with a little exclamation that was not complimentary to the police; but when the name of the next witness rang through the room he leaned forward again and spoke with some irritation to the prosecutor.

"Is it your intention, sir, to develop through the testimony of THIS witness the whereabouts of Miss Page after the murder? It seems to me that that is the testimony that should be brought forward now."

"Your Honor, the movements of Miss Page between the time she was left unconscious in the room at the Republic until the following morning will have to be told by Miss Page herself. They are not known to me and I have no witnesses to testify to her whereabouts or actions. I have, in fact, been unable to get anyone who actually saw the prisoner during her flight. The truth must come out, of course, and I have in the meantime called the sister of James Pollock to develop an important line in the case for the State."

Again Langdon smiled, and the Judge sat back with a little shrug, as, amid a murmurous wave of comment and curiosity the name of the new witness was repeated:

"Ruth Pollock!"

The sister of the dead man who throughout the earlier testimony had sat unnoticed among the throng, was a tragic figure in her trailing black garments as she went to the stand.

"Miss Pollock, you have known the prisoner, Mary Page, for some years, have you not?"

"Yes, we were at school together and remained intimate friends afterwards."

"Was your brother also a friend of hers?"

"He was."

"Was there ever any closer relationship than that of mere friendship between your brother and Mary Page?"

"Yes. They were engaged to be married."

Even the Judge sat forward in his chair at the words, so simply uttered and yet so sharply changing the aspect of things. The prosecutor's next question came quickly.

"Was your brother happy in his engagement?" he said.

"I don't know how to answer that

question. He was happy because he wanted to marry Mary, but he knew she didn't love him."

"If Miss Page did not love your brother, why was she willing to be his wife?"

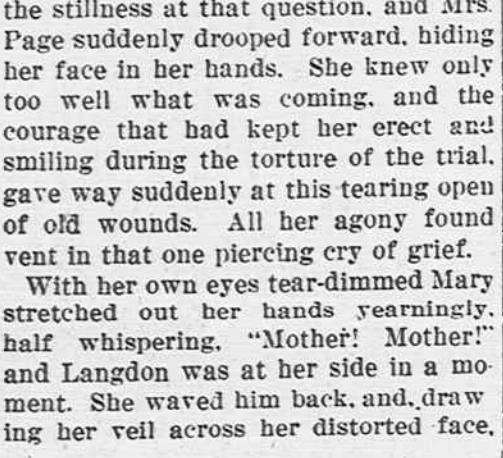
The girl flushed and answered less readily:

"Well, you see—there were reasons—and she had promised."

"Will you please tell us those reasons?"

A little gasping sob wrenched from a woman's overburdened heart broke the stillness at that question, and Mrs. Page suddenly drooped forward, hiding her face in her hands. She knew only too well what was coming, and the courage that had kept her erect and smiling during the torture of the trial, gave way suddenly at this tearing open of old wounds. All her agony found vent in that one piercing cry of grief.

With her own eyes tear-dimmed Mary stretched out her hands yearningly, half whispering, "Mother! Mother!" and Langdon was at her side in a moment. She waved him back, and, drawing her veil across her distorted face,



"Do you mean that the check was forged?"

smothered the sobs that shook her thin shoulders like a storm, as the prosecutor repeated his question.

"It all happened several years ago—five—maybe six. Mary and I were very good friends at that time, and I was at her home a great deal. So I knew that—that they were greatly in need of money. I overheard Mr. Page say that there would be ruin for all of them, and that they'd be turned out on the streets unless he 'got the money' before morning. Mary overheard him, too, and when he went out she and I sat trying to think of some way by which we could raise money. It was while we were still talking that Mr. Page came back. He—he—had been drinking, and he was waving a check around his head and cried, 'I've done a good turn for a friend and I've been well paid for it. The Lord helps those who help themselves.' He seemed terribly excited, and went out again almost immediately saying that he wanted to cash the check before the banks closed."

"Whose check was it?"

"My brother's."

"Was he interested in Miss Page at that time?"

"Yes. He had always been, I think. He was not at all in love with her, but he had told me that."

"He gave her father a check for a large sum?"

"No." She flushed hotly now, and cast a timid glance at Mary, as if half deprecating the necessity of the testimony. "That was just it. My brother had not signed that check."

"Do you mean," broke in the Judge, "that the check was forged?"

"Yes. A detective sent by the bank came to the Page home while I was there and told Mrs. Page and Mary and me. Mary didn't believe it at first, but at any rate she said she didn't know where her father was, though we both guessed he—he—was in the bar of the hotel. He was mostly there. James was horrified when he found out that it was Mary's father who had cashed the check because, not knowing, he had already told the police to 'prosecute the man to the limit.' Mary cried and begged him to do something to save her father, and James said, 'I'll save him for your sake, Mary, if you will promise to do something for me in return.'"

"Did he say what that something was?"

"No. She didn't even ask. She just said she would do anything in the world he wanted if he would save her father. So he went with us to the hotel and we got there just in time to save Mr. Page from arrest."

"How did you 'save him,' as you call it?"

"James told the detective that he had forgotten about giving the check to Mr. Page and that it was perfectly good."

"And Miss Page was naturally grateful to your brother for his having saved her father?" prompted the District Attorney, as Ruth broke off, not knowing how to go on.

"Grateful? Yes. She—she promised to marry him. I heard her tell Mr. Langdon."

"Was Mr. Langdon at the house at that time?"

"No, he came while I was sitting talking to Mrs. Page. Mary and James were in the next room, so I went to let Mr. Langdon in. He stopped at the gate, looking at my brother's automobile, and I walked down the path to meet him. While we were coming back toward the porch the others came to the door. Suddenly James caught Mary up in his arms and kissed her. She seemed to struggle against him and, slipping away, ran into the house. Mr. Langdon, thinking that my brother had kissed Mary against her will, rushed at him and threatened to strike him."

"Your Honor!" It was Langdon's voice, suddenly harsh and strained. "I protest against this evidence as entirely irrelevant and leading up to nothing that has a bearing upon the case at present."

"The court cannot sustain your objection," said the Judge, curtly. "It is very unfortunate for you, Mr. Langdon, but whatever brings out the details of the relationship between Mary Page and James Pollock is decidedly relevant."

The District Attorney smiled in triumph. He turned to Ruth, who looked startled at the interruption, and said, gently:

"You were saying, Miss Pollock, that Mr. Langdon threatened your brother. Was there a fight?"

"No. Mary ran between them and said that James had a right to kiss her, that—that they were engaged."

"What did Mr. Langdon say then?"

"He didn't say anything. He just turned around and walked away, and Mary began to cry."

"Was the engagement of your brother and Miss Page made public?"

"Yes. At a dance."

"Did your brother and his fiancée seem happy on that occasion?"

"No. I—in fact, I know they were not."

"Did they tell you so?"

"No, but I overheard. I—was hiding in the conservatory."

With a smothered gasp of surprise Mary's head came up suddenly and for the first time the eyes of the two girls met; but now it was Mary's that were accusatory and Ruth's that were troubled and it was in answer to that reproach, rather than the startled look on the prosecutor's face, that made Ruth add shyly: "It was all just in fun! I had promised a dance to Mr. Brandon, but I had told him that if he could find me before the music was half over, I would give him two more, for I had discovered a nook behind the palms which I was sure no one else could find."

She stammered over the girlish confession, a tide of crimson dyeing her pale cheeks.

"While I was hidden there, Mary and Mr. Langdon, who had been dancing together, came into the conservatory. I—I—didn't move because I felt I should look so silly, hiding like a kid behind the palms, and I thought they would soon go away. But—they didn't."

"Did Miss Page say anything about her engagement?"

"They were talking about it as they came in, and the first thing I heard was, 'I have given my word, Philip, and I must go through with it—even if it kills me.' She was half crying. Then Mr. Langdon said quietly, 'Mary, you don't love him, do you?' And Mary said, 'You know I don't, Philip. There is only one man in the world that I love.' Then he took her in his arms and she broke down and sobbed; but when he tried to make her say she would break her engagement she wouldn't, and she wouldn't tell him why she had promised to marry James. She only said that she could never be free unless James gave her back her promise."

"Do you mean to say," interrupted the Judge, "that Mr. Langdon knew nothing of the episode of the forged check?"

"No. Mary told me she couldn't bear to tell him about her father. Besides, James had made her promise to keep that part of their engagement a secret from everyone."

"It seems incredible!" said His Honor, settling back, and the prosecutor asked, as if suddenly seeing a new viewpoint:

"Did your brother know of Miss Page's love for Mr. Langdon?"

"I don't know whether he knew then or not, but he knew later because Mr. Langdon told him. While I was still

back of the palms James came to hunt for Mary, and she didn't want him to see she had been crying, so she went out and Mr. Langdon stood waiting for James. He told my brother that Mary was very unhappy in her engagement, but felt that she was in honor bound to go through with it, and he urged James to set her free."

"What did your brother say?"

"Well, he was—very angry," she answered, deprecatingly. "I—I—know he thought it was just interference, and he said, 'I suppose you want her set free so YOU can marry her.' And Mr. Langdon said, 'I want her set free because she doesn't love you and is breaking her heart over her promise to marry you.' 'What is that to you?' asked James. 'Do you think she is in love with you?' And Mr. Langdon said angrily, 'I know she is, but that has nothing to do with the matter. Can't you be decent for once and set a girl free when she doesn't want to marry you?' That made James even more furious, and he fairly shouted, 'Mary will learn to love me fast enough, once we're married, and I shall never set her free. She has promised and I'm going to see that she keeps that promise. Besides, do you think I'm going to let everybody say she jilted me, after we've announced our engagement this way? I should say not.'"

"Did Mr. Langdon reply?"

"No. He just turned round with a shrug and walked away, and I came out and joined my brother."

"Did he ask if you had overheard?"

"Yes."

"Did you tell him of the conversation between Miss Page and Mr. Langdon?"

"Yes. I felt that he ought to know. You—see, he was my brother, even though Mary was my friend."

"Did your brother make any comment?"

"No, he just flushed up a little; then he laughed and said they'd have to get over it, and he was going to marry Mary anyway."

"Did Mr. Langdon ever make any other plea to your brother, or see Miss Page again?"

"Not then, but Mr. Brandon told me—"

"Your Honor!" broke in Langdon, leaping to his feet. "I object!"

"The court will sustain that objection," said the Judge, promptly. "Miss Pollock, you must not repeat what you have simply heard from others, only what you saw and heard yourself."

"May it please the court," cried the prosecutor, quickly, "I shall be glad to have all of the answer of the witness with the exception of the words 'not then' stricken out, for what Mr. Brandon said he will tell the court himself."

Brandon! Langdon winced at the name, and Mary, lifting her head, turned a pair of despairing eyes upon him that seemed to ask if all their friends were to be leagued against them in this fight for life and liberty.

He could object—could fight to have the witness kept out of the stand—but in the end he knew that he would lose and perhaps lend added weight to the testimony. He fancied he knew what THAT would be, and his teeth clenched in an agony of longing and a rage against the futility of that desire to spare Mary the raking up of these old memories—memories that brought a throbbing ache to his own heart that was only balanced by the bitter exultation of the thought that at least Pollock was DEAD now. And he vowed to himself that Mary should soon be free of the law as well as of James; but he did not face the fleeting thought of the price that might have to be paid for that freedom of Mary Page.

As for Mary herself, after that one fleeting glance at Langdon she drooped again like a flower cut off from rain and sunlight and air.

She would not look at Brandon when he took the stand, though his eyes as he glanced from her to Langdon were full of mute appeal as if he wanted somehow to explain that it was not by choice that he stood there; and there was an aggressive, almost a hostile note in his voice, as he answered the prosecutor's first incisive question:

"Mr. Brandon, you were present, were you not, on the night of the dance given to announce the engagement of Miss Page to James Pollock?"

"I was."

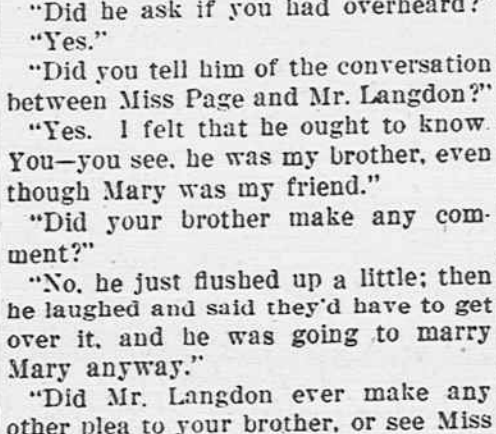
"You were well acquainted with both of them?"

"We all grew up together. I was not particularly intimate with Mr. Pollock," said Brandon drily.

"Did anything occur to lead you to believe that Miss Page was not happy in her engagement?"

"Yes."

"Will you tell us what that occurrence was?"



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